

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Previously Presented) A non-round base structure for a blow-molded container having rectangular sidewalls, comprising:

a support heel comprising a bearing edge and a flexible vacuum absorbing area having an outer portion and a roughly ellipsoidal inner portion, said outer portion merging with the container rectangular sidewalls and said inner portion merging with a central concave wall;

the central concave wall having an apex and a plurality of ribs extending outward from the apex along the concave wall, each rib having a rounded edge extending outward from the interior of the container; and

whereby the vacuum absorbing area and ribs cooperate to enhance the structural integrity of the container by rigidifying said central concave wall and by providing multiple paths of interengageable surfaces that make it difficult for deflection, once initiated, to propagate to undesired distortion.

2. (Previously Presented) The non-round base structure for a blow-molded container of claim 1, wherein the outer portion is roughly ellipsoidal.

3. (Original) The non-round base structure for a blow-molded container of claim 2, wherein the flexible vacuum absorbing area enhances the support bearing edge upon container filling.

4. (Previously Presented) The non-round base structure for a blow-molded container of claim 2, wherein the flexible area defines a cord length between the inner portion and the outer portion, and the cord length is no more than about 25% longer at its longest point than at its shortest point.

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Original) The base structure according to claim 1, wherein the ribs form a substantially symmetric array.

7. (Original) The base structure according to claim 6, wherein the array is substantially star-shaped.

8. (Original) The base structure according to claim 1, wherein there are at least about six ribs.

9. (Previously Presented) The base structure of claim 1, wherein the vacuum flexible area partially surrounds the area defined by the concave wall.

10. (Previously Presented) The base structure of claim 9, wherein the vacuum flexible area is separated into two roughly symmetrical areas by recessed structures on opposite sides of the concave wall.

11. (Original) A base structure according to claim 1, wherein said base structure comprises polyethylene terephthalate.

12. (Currently Amended) A non-round base structure for a blow-molded container having rectangular sidewalls, comprising:

a support heel comprising a bearing edge and a flexible vacuum absorbing area having a roughly ~~ellipsoidal~~ rectangular outer portion and a roughly ellipsoidal inner portion, said outer portion merging with the container rectangular sidewalls and said inner portion merging with a central concave wall;

the central concave wall having an apex and a plurality of ribs extending outward from the apex along the concave wall, each rib having a rounded edge extending outward from the interior of the container; and

whereby the vacuum absorbing area and ribs cooperate to enhance the structural integrity of the container by rigidifying said central concave wall and by providing multiple paths of interengageable surfaces that make it difficult for deflection, once initiated, to propagate to undesired distortion.

13. (Original) The non-round base structure for a blow-molded container of claim 12, wherein the flexible vacuum absorbing area enhances the support bearing edge upon container filling.

14. (Previously Presented) The non-round base structure for a blow-molded container of claim 12, wherein the flexible area defines a cord length between the inner portion and the outer portion, and the cord length is no more than about 25% longer at its longest point than at its shortest point.

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Original) The base structure according to claim 12, wherein the ribs form a substantially star-shaped, symmetric array.

17. (Previously Presented) The base structure of claim 12, wherein the vacuum flexible area partially surrounds the area defined by the concave wall.

18. (Previously Presented) The base structure of claim 17, wherein the vacuum flexible area is separated into two roughly symmetrical areas by recessed structures on opposite sides of the concave wall.

19. (Original) A base structure according to claim 12, wherein said base structure comprises polyethylene terephthalate.

20. (Previously Presented) A non-round base structure for a blow-molded container having rectangular sidewalls, comprising:

a support heel comprising a bearing edge and a flexible vacuum absorbing area having a roughly ellipsoidal outer portion and a roughly ellipsoidal inner portion, said outer portion merging with the container rectangular sidewalls and said inner portion merging with a central concave wall, wherein the flexible vacuum absorbing area is adapted to enhance the support bearing edge upon container filling and defines a cord length between the inner portion and the outer portion that is no more than about 25% longer at its longest point than at its shortest point;

the central concave wall having an apex and a plurality of ribs extending outward from the apex along the concave wall to form a substantially star-shaped symmetric array, each rib having a rounded edge extending outward from the interior of the container; and

whereby the vacuum absorbing area and ribs cooperate to enhance the structural integrity of the container by rigidifying said central concave wall and by providing multiple paths of interengageable surfaces that make it difficult for deflection, once initiated, to propagate to undesired distortion.